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III.

THE SISTER OF THE DRAMA.

PERMIT me to offer a few objections to Mr. Boucicault's interesting article in your April number, and correct some inaccuracies of statement. The form of drama called opera was invented nearly 300 years ago, instead of 200, as he says. As early as 1594 Peri composed an opera, and in 1600 the work was published and performed in honor of Maria Medici and Henry the 4th of France. Conceding the point, that opera is not a drama in the realistic sense in which Mr. Boucicault so amusingly represents it, to those who have been thrilled and delighted by the indescribable power of song, enhanced with the adjuncts of chorus and orchestra, it would seem more appropriate to say that opera is not a drama any more than an angel is a woman.

Opera is essentially an idealization of the drama. No character can remain on the plane of reality in lyric works. It is unnatural for *Romeo* and *Juliet* to sing their thoughts of love even, and from a realistic (dramatic) standpoint silly for the nurse, *Mercutio*, and the rest of them to utter their ideas in sustained tones; yet a serenade introduced for the one, and a comic song for the other, would be perfectly proper and logical. For this reason it is necessary that operatic subjects should be ideals rather than realities. For this reason the masters chose always classic subjects, Orpheus, Iphigenia, etc., characters of fable sufficiently unreal to wear with grace the garments of music. It is not more absurd for your neighbor Jones to go about chanting, "How do you do this morning, sir?" "What's the price of stocks?" etc., than it would be to appear on change wrapped in a Roman toga with a laurel wreath on his brow.

Therefore, I do not wonder at Mr. Boucicault's disgust at the dramatic inconsistencies in Sir Julius Benedict's treatment of his "Rose of Killarney." But, in spite of these inconsistencies and monstrous absurdities, let me draw attention to some facts which seem to have escaped his notice.

In the first place, his operatic experiences have been of an era dating nearly fifty years back. No doubt his own activity on the boards has prevented him from attending many more modern works, and thus much has escaped his attention which I doubt not he would have enjoyed, even from a dramatic standpoint. To prove that musical treatment of a dramatic work may be successful, let me remind him that Gounod's opera, "Faust," has driven Goethe's drama of the same name off the stage. Here the characters were *ideal*, and the French master's inspiration clothed them with a charm and beauty that the drama itself could not have represented. Even so realistic a subject as the troubadour, "Il Trovatore," has been given a vital strength of enduring impressiveness which, it seems to me, no drama on the same subject could have sustained.

And who that has witnessed the mental agonies of the king's jester in "Rigoletto," when performed by a good actor and singer like Galassi, has not felt a sympathy as deep, if not so horrible, as when the "Fool's Revenge" is enacted even by Booth?

Again, Wagner, in his operas, the "Flying Dutchman" but more especially in "Lohengrin," has given a happy wedding of ideal characters in action, with music that does not offend the sense of logic, while it transforms them to the dignity of demi-gods, and lifts the listeners into a lofty realm of emotion where speech is awed into silence, and thought is merged into adoration and ecstasy. Of the thousands who have been uplifted and transfused with these divine inspirations, you will find few to admit that opera is a thing of the past, "evanescent," an "exotic," etc.

Dramatists use music as a valuable adornment to add charms to their creations. Musicians use the drama for the sake of giving them greater opportunities for power and variety. The power and enduring qualities of music are best shown when it is remembered that for generations a "Don Juan," by Mozart, with its utterly inane libretto, can remain attractive. And so, if it be true that our operatic artists are not histrionic geniuses, it is equally true that the librettos usually call for little acting. And the same pieces presented by the best actors in the world *without music* would not attract any one at all. So, if it be true that many vocal artists might find no place as juvenile tragedians or leading ladies, should they lose their voices, it is equally true that your actors appearing in "Lucia," "Carmen," or other operas *without music*, would fare as badly. I also deny the implied inferior histrionic abilities of Gerster, Patti, Lucca, Nilsson, Hastreiter, Hauk, Brandt, and other singers, as compared to Miss Terry, Ada Rehan, and others, whose talents grace the dramatic arena. If these singers should lose their vocal art, I believe there is not one but could, if she chose, appear with advantage in the drama. If in opera they appear at a disadvantage, it is because the opportunity is not offered to demonstrate their talent in that direction, and not because of lack of histrionic power.

Who that has seen Marianne Brandt in the "Prophet," "Fidelio," and "Lohengrin," can deny her wonderful dramatic power? And did not Madame Hastreiter present a consummate characterization of *Ortrud*, the embodiment of hatred, hypocrisy, and revenge?

The sextette of "Lucia," of which Mr. Boucicault speaks in such (logically just) ridicule, I have never yet heard given without its moving audiences to enthusiasm; and who that has witnessed a Lucca as *Marguerite*, a Nilsson as *Valentine*, in the "Huguenots," and the matchless Patti in "Traviata," would deny that they were *actresses* as well as *singers*?

Again, the opera is not dependent upon government support abroad any more than the drama, and in Italy it is self-supporting. That music is an art continually changing is true. The music of the seventeenth century is not the music of the nineteenth. Our day has absorbed the best of the past. But turning to the drama, does not the same picture present itself? Where is Boccaccio, where Katzebue, Congreve and others? Perhaps no writer of plays knows as well as Mr. Boucicault himself where the best of these authors may be found in modern dramas, for no doubt he is conscious of having assimilated much in his own works.

Music is the youngest of the arts, poetry the oldest; yet the spirit of transmigration is shown even in poetry. For is not Homer a compilation of various men's recitations; Æsop's fables a collection of stories of many generations' filterings of wisdom; and does not Dante absorb and reiterate the gloomy superstitions and bigotries of hundreds of mediæval fanatics? At the present day there is not found in England a single theatre where Shakspere's immortal works can be seen and heard, and the waves of but two centuries have washed the tablets of his soul's deep thought-carvings. How long will the process of disintegration of this greatest combination of mortal talents be retarded? At the most but a century; for it is in nature that the centuries devour each other and reproduce in some new form their vital qualities.

If this is true of the oldest of the arts, with a definite speech to aid in crystallizing it for enduring, is it strange that change should be written on the face of music, yet a child in the family of the true and beautiful? Permit me to remind Mr. Boucicault that despite this apparent fickle character of music, the Gregorian chants have been sung for more than a thousand years. The Hallelujah, still sung in the Jewish synagogues, is thousands of years old. The music of Palestrina

is yet in vogue in the church service. Thus it would seem that the "divine art" possessed a vital individuality almost equal to that of its older sister.

But the power of music in connection with the drama has asserted itself in spite of logical absurdities, and while it is true that it appeals in these instances to the senses rather than to the intellect, it is not that the opera is appreciated by the illiterate masses as compared with the educated classes; for music is a matter of special cultivation. Only a small minority are usually found who enjoy it in the higher forms, such as oratorio, opera, and symphony. To the many educated thousands who recognize the adage that "fiction hath in it a higher aim than fact," Mr. B. will appeal in vain for the destruction of opera. For while admitting the service and power, not alone for entertaining, but of instructing and improving the mind, of the drama, I must claim that music hath in it a higher aim than realism, an aim which tints our sorrow-clouds with golden sunlight of hope, gives joy wings to soar above mundane things, and lifts the soul in inexpressible adoration before the Creator of the Universe.

S. G. PRATT.

IV.

MORLEY ON EMERSON.

THE essay on Emerson by Mr. John Morley is read with extreme pleasure, because one feels that, although the writer's views of the world differ fundamentally from those of Emerson, he yet endeavors to render the fullest justice. Therefore, it is that, when he seems inadequately to interpret our seer, the impulse arises to set the matter right. I find Mr. Morley at fault when he views Emerson's solution of the great problem of individual deprivation. I will quote his words:

"One radical tragedy in nature Emerson admits. If I am poor in faculty, dim in vision, shut out from opportunity, in every sense an outcast from the inheritance of the earth, that seems indeed to be a tragedy. 'But see the facts clearly and these mountainous inequalities vanish. Love reduces them, as the sun melts the icebergs in the sea. The heart and soul of all men being one, this bitterness of His and Mine ceases. His is mine.' Surely words, words, words! What can be more idle, when one of the world's bitter puzzles is pressed on the teacher, than that he should betake himself to an attitude whence it is not visible, and then assure us that it is not only invisible, but non-existent? This is not to see the facts clearly, but to pour the fumes of obscuratation around them."

But what are the "facts?" A person who is blind, for instance, through the loving devotion of another, receives so much he may almost be said to have gained his sight. It is the constant effort on the part of the good to equalize conditions. The *causes* of deprivation, whether of body, mind, or environment, are being investigated to the intent that they be *removed*. In those few terse words of Emerson, where he speaks of "love" and the "inequalities" that "vanish," he suggests the *process* whereby men are to become equal partakers of their inheritance—are becoming so, in fact. Who can look around him and see the work being done for the amelioration of the less-favored, and not declare that Emerson truly answered the problem? Every new discovery of science that can be turned into this channel of help is so turned, and so each decade sees the problem lessened in a wonderful ratio. The larger share of humanity's woe and loss seems to have been the result of man's own infliction; it only remains for man to undo his work.

The words quoted from Emerson by Mr. Morley were from the essay on Compensation. In another, on "Heroism," Emerson shows how the puzzle, when the threads are untangled, proves to be of the eternal law of debit and credit, and